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# NEWS

# LETTER



A Research Center for Turf and Field Sports,  
their History and Social Significance

Middleburg, Virginia 22117

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No. 22

## Racing Silks

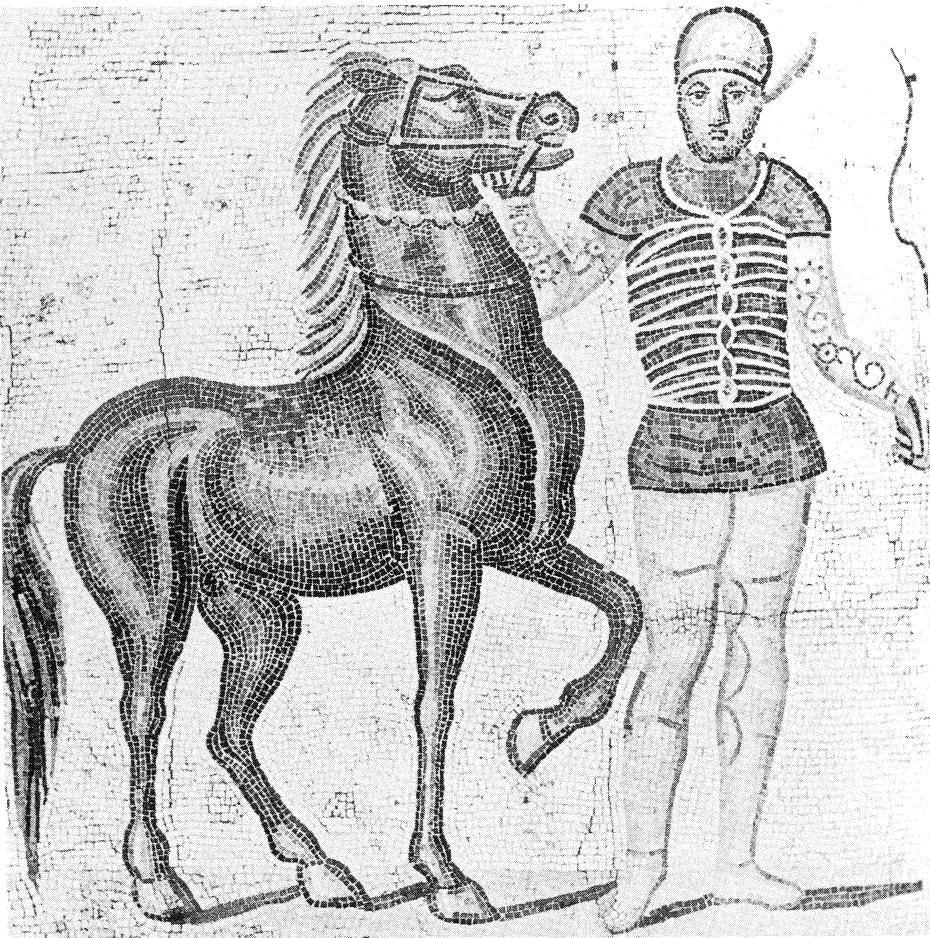
Frederick Burlew

The jockey, attired in his colorful silks when he enters the paddock, can take pride in the fact his costume is an integral part of racing tradition. Jockeys are to be saluted because in their brilliant and varied colored hues, they prevent racing from becoming a drab mechanical sport.

From earliest time, man has used color for identification purposes and quite early he introduced it into his sporting events, especially when he began to race horses.

In 624 B.C. the Greeks used color at their Olympiad. Bare-back riders wore colorful draped cloaks as they paraded into the arena. When the races started these were removed and all that remained were head bands of gold, silver and blue. And if that wasn't sufficient color, evidence is presented that the horses were also dyed.

According to *Kennets Roman Antiquities*, the various Emperors introduced color to the tunics and harnesses of their companies of charioteers - green, red, white, sky blue and golden yellow. Green was the favorite color of Caligula and Nero, and they both expressed it in devious ways. Caligula once had the horses and charioteers of the Blue Team poisoned to assure a Green victory. Nero wore a green toga to the Circus and had



Mosaic from the Nazionale delle Terme, Rome, of a charioteer in the green livery of the Prasina faction, to which Caligula was fervidly loyal. The racing garb shows reinforcement stitched over the rib cage, leather leggings and a crash helmet.

the entire floor strewn with green copper-oxide dust.

Extensive examination of the relics of other ancient civilization reveal representative color used also at their racing events.

The British, however, must be accredited with establishing the custom of outfitting the race rider in appropriate livery with color and design variances. This dress, quite similar to that worn today with modification, was established in the latter part of the 17th and early 18th centuries during the reigns of Charles II and Queen Anne. Although the chronicles record racing meets in 1114, individual colors are first mentioned in 1515, when Henry VIII occupied the throne. If color was used earlier, sufficient and supporting evidence is not recorded.

The colorful trappings of heraldry presented the British with possession of many designs which were adopted to their racing colors.

During the early 1700's, as the owners list increased, confusion resulted from the dupicity which arose. It became absolutely necessary to vary color and design for positive identification when the mounts became obscured in the meadows, hills and dales of the countryside, the courses of the day. This resulted in the famous Newmarket resolution of October 4, 1762 stating colors were to be annexed by the respective owners and worn by their riders. The resolution was as follows:—

"For the greater convenience of distinguishing the horses in running, and also for the prevention of disputes arising from not knowing the colours of each rider, the under-mentioned gentlemen have come to the resolution and agreement of having the colours annexed to the following names worn by their respective riders:—

H.R.H. the Duke of Cumberland.....Purple  
His grace the Duke of Grafton.....Sky blue  
His Grace the Duke of Devonshire .Straw Colour  
His Grace the Duke of Northumberland ..Yellow  
His Grace the Duke of Kingston .....Crimson  
His Grace the Duke of Ancaster.....Buff  
His Grace the Duke of Bridgwater...Garter blue  
The Most Noble the Marquis of Rockingham  
.....Green  
The Right Hon. the Earl of Waldegrave

.....	Deep red
The Right Hon. the Earl of Orford	Purple and white
.....	Blue
The Right Hon. Viscount Bolingbroke	Black
The Right Hon. Lord Grosvenor.....	Orange
Sir John Moore, Bart. ....	Darkest green
Sir Jas. Lowther, Bart.....	Orange
Mr. R. Vernon.....	White
Hon. Mr. Greville ..	Brown trimmed with yellow
Mr. Jenison Shafto.....	Pink

"The Stewards therefore hope, in the name of the Jockey Club, that the above-named gentlemen will take care that the riders be provided with dresses accordingly." Originally a black velvet cap, like that of a huntsman, was the only one used by the riders, and was more or less associated with the colours enumerated, but at a later period the cap was altered, varying in colour, and has continued so down to present date.

It does not appear, however, to have had much weight with the members of the Jockey Club themselves, for on the 10th February 1771 a further resolution was passed at a Jockey Club meeting held at the Star and Garter Tavern, Pall Mall, London, and adopted by the Noblemen and gentlemen who were present, with the following declarations of their colours:—

His Grace the Duke of Kingston .....	Crimson
His Grace the Duke of Ancaster ..	Very light buff
His Grace the Duke of Grafton	.....
.....	Dark blue, black cap
His Grace the Duke of Northumberland	.....
.....	Gold-colour, cap the same
The Most Noble the Marquis of Rockingham	.....
.....	Green, black cap
The Right Hon. Viscount Bolingbroke .....	Black
The Right Hon. Lord Carlisle	.....
.....	Scarlet and grey stripes, cap the same
The Right Hon. Lord Grosvenor	.....
.....	Orange, black cap
The Right Hon. Lord Farnham .....	Sky blue
The Right Hon. Lord Ossory	.....
.....	Pea-green, cap the same
Sir T. C. Bunbury, Bart.	.....
.....	Pink and white stripe, black cap
The Right Hon. C.J. Fox	.....
.....	Green and white stripe, cap the same
Mr. Thos. Foley	.....
.....	Green and white stripe, cap the same
Mr. Pigott.....	Pompadour, cap the same
Mr. P. Blake <sup>1</sup>	Black and white, cap the same
Mr. C. Blake .....	Grey and white stripe
Mr. Burton.....	Yellow, cap the same
Mr. Ogilvy .....	Harlequin
Mr. R. Vernon.....	White, black cap
Mr. P. Wentworth .....	White satin

From the above date the Riders' Colours began to be placed upon the Jockey Club record, and the growth of the list is interesting as showing the extent of the Turf's development down to modern dates. In 1762 we find 19 registrations; in 1862 no less than 590 names of owners who have declared their colours are on record. The resolution adopted by the members of the Jockey Club, it would seem, was by no means obligatory, for there are many persons whose Racing Colours, whether members or not, were never registered, and no public record of them exists.

Owing probably to a corresponding difficulty, painters as well as publishers have sometimes fallen into error both as to their representations and publications. Some few instances will explain. For example in a painting of *Eclipse*, by J. N. Sartorius, a small panel with a distant view of the old stand at Newmarket, the jockey, probably John Oakley, is represented in a blue jacket and black cap, instead of Colonel O'Kelly's colours, which were crimson and black cap. This famous horse, from the time he was purchased by Colonel O'Kelly from Mr. Wildman, was never out of the former's possession. *Diamond* is another example. In a print published in 1799, usually when found in good condition a beautiful example of the old colour-printing, the jockey appears in a light blue jacket, white cap, whereas the colours of Mr. Cookson, his owner, were at the time purple body, straw cap. Again, in the print published of *Antonio*, the declared winner of the disputed St. Leger in 1819, owned by Mr. J. Ferguson, the jockey, Thos. Nicholson, is represented in scarlet. This horse was sold the same year to Mr. J. Clifton for £ 1000, and should be associated with the proper colours of Mr. J. Ferguson, viz., blue, yellow stripe. It was not till 1823 that Mr. Ferguson changed his colours to scarlet, long after the horse had left his possession. *Dangerous*, winner of the Derby in 1833, in a print published at the same date, is represented with Chapple on his back in a scarlet jacket, black cap, whereas his owner Mr. Sadler's colours were white body, scarlet sleeves, black cap. *Elis*, winner of the St.

Leger in 1836, owned by the Earl of Lichfield, is represented with John B. Day in the saddle, in blue body, red sleeves, blue cap, instead of the proper colours, black body, red sleeves, black cap. Cossack, winner of the Derby in 1847, in a painting by F. C. Turner, has Sim Templeman on his back, dressed in scarlet body, orange sleeves and cap, instead of orange body and cap, scarlet sleeves.

These examples show that at all times considerable difficulty has been experienced, from one cause or another, in ascertaining the colors actually worn by the riders, as no effort seems ever to have been made to show, as far as possible, the changes and alterations which took place from time to time.

The American colonies adopted the British costuming of the jockey before the Revolution, but for the next hundred years it was almost an impossible task in getting owners to claim a particular set of racing colors, not that they weren't used, but because there was no single enforcement agency. Many attempts were made by the existing courses, personages and racing periodicals requesting owners to claim and submit their designs. The pleas were unsuccessful and met with a complacency, perhaps attributable to the American feeling of independence, and like in Britain earlier, duplication became rampant.

This was rectified by the formation of The Board of Control in 1891 and by its successor, The Jockey Club in 1894. This was the first American governing body requiring the registration of owner's colors, with penalties for violations.

For the last 90 years over 95% of the colors used on North American racetracks have been, at one time or another, registered with The Jockey Club.

Racing colors are selected for many and varied reasons and are often inherited from generation to generation. Some in use today are traceable back over one hundred years.

The oldest set in continuous use in American racing today is the scarlet of Mrs. John A. Morris. Formerly known as "The Barbary Colors" they were taken by Mr. Francis Morris in the 1860's when he raced the great mares Ruthless,

Remorseless and Relentless, who were known as "The Barbary Mares". They may have been used even earlier at The Metairie Track in New Orleans in the 1850's. Although not in continuous use, the all maroon colors of Mr. Howell Jackson are probably our oldest, tracing back to General William G. Harding of "Belle Meade", Nashville, Tennessee. The orange of Claiborne, not always in possession of the Hancock family, descend from the Doswells of Virginia.

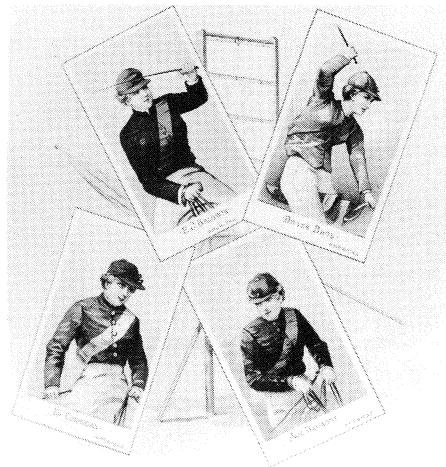
Phil Dwyer, in 1915, presented Price McKinney his (Dwyer's) famous "red, blue sash", after Mr. McKinney stated he was having difficulty choosing a set and expressed an admiration for Dwyer's. Jockey Jimmy McLaughlin, when he began to train, used the "blue, orange sleeves and cap" of the late George Lorillard which were presented to him as a gift from Mrs. Lorillard.

Alfred G. Vanderbilt selected his mother's colors "cerise, white blocks, cerise sleeves, white cap", but he changed the blocks to diamonds. William Woodward's Belair Stud colors were originally "white, scarlet braid, cuffs and cap" before he purchased those of Lord Zetland of Britain, "white, red spots, scarlet cap". However, when his horses raced in England, they were required to use a "black cap".

Samuel D. Riddle's pride in Man o' War was so intense he wanted to change his "black, yellow sash and bars on sleeves" to another combination so none of his other horses would wear the same colors. This was solved by reducing the number of bars on the sleeves from six to five. Marcus Daly, the mining magnate, couldn't resist his Irish birthright. He chose "copper, silver sleeves" and his riders proudly wore an emerald green cap.

The Jockey Club frowns upon the use of colors for advertising purposes. A. C. Burnham, a cheese manufacturer, was prevented from placing a wheel of cheese on his silks; as was Colonel E. O. Pepper, a whiskey distiller, from displaying a bottle of his Keystone whiskey on the back of his silks.

With new owners entering racing every year, the demands upon color and combinations has become acute and it



*Racing Colors of the World* was published by Allen & Ginter of Richmond, Virginia as advertising for their "Straight Cut Cigarettes and Pet Cigarettes manufactured since 1875." An interesting note is the use of women jockeys to model the silks. Illustrated are the colors of August Belmont, the Dwyer brothers, E.J. Baldwin and Ed Corrigan and other prominent American and European sportsmen.

will be interesting to see how it is resolved. Certainly, not like the ancient Greeks by dyeing the horses.

### *Yorkshire Ballad*

"The bell is ringing for the start:  
There's Sim in blue and white  
With Heseltine in red, and Job  
in lilac, and Cartwright:  
There's Holmes in blue and scarlet sleeves,  
And now I can descry  
The tartan vest and yellow cap  
Of Mr. Thomas Lye!"  
Anon.

(Wilkes' *Spirit of the Times* — September 29, 1860)

Mr. Burlew, a 'Friend' of the NSL, and contributor of the article on Henry Stull in the December 1985 newsletter, is a collector of racing memorabilia and has done extensive research into the subject. Additional notes from *Raciana* by J. B. Muir, NSL Huth Lonsdale Arundel Collection.

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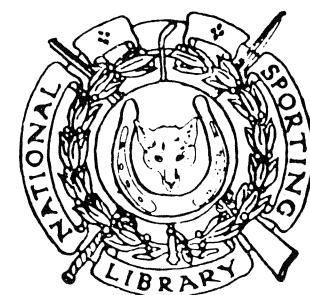
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